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ABSTRACT

Education is one of the most often used methods in the prevention of Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). Numerous educational models have been designed in response to the needs of various groups to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS. Results have been mixed because of the failure to determine which techniques are most effective in specific situations. In an attempt to determine the effect of an educational module on students' attitudes toward high risk sexual behaviors, a premodule survey was administered to all entering freshmen (N=563) in an all male liberal arts college during the first 2 weeks of the first semester. A postmodule survey was administered during the second semester after a module on AIDS and STDs was presented. Findings are consistent with the literature which indicates that knowledge does not necessarily change behavior to be less risky and that education alone is not sufficient to prevent high risk sexual behaviors. The results of the surveys are presented in 12 tables. (LL)

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The Effect of Educational Intervention on Attitudes Toward Selected High Risk Sexual Behaviors

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Abstract: Results of a survey of all entering freshmen (563) in an all male liberal arts college concerning their attitudes towards high risk sexual behaviors are reported. A premodule survey was administered during the first two weeks of the first semester of the freshman year. A postmodule survey was administer during second semester after the students had an educational module on HIV/AIDS and STDs. Findings are consistent with the literature which indicates that knowledge does not necessarily change behavior to be less risky. Information was obtained to determine some of the influences of risky sexual behavior to college freshman males. The implications of our findings for future research are briefly discussed.

Key Words: HIV, AIDS, attitudes, high risk sexual behaviors, educational strategies, college students.

INTRODUCTION

Recent information concerning risks of contracting the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) by sexually active persons has caused educators to broaden approaches in planning educational strategies for HIV/AIDS prevention. There is an increased number of heterosexual individuals under 25 years of age who have acquired HIV. This indicates that HIV/AIDS can be contracted by anyone who is sexually active and/or who participates in other high risk behaviors such as intravenous drug use.

Although much has been learned about HIV/AIDS no cure has been developed, and the only method of prevention is to avoid behavior that can be categorized as high risk. For this reason, education is one of the most powerful and often used methodologies in the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

Numerous educational models have been designed in response to the needs of various groups to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS. The results have been mixed because of the failure to determine which techniques are most effective in specific situations.

In a study of 212 college students conducted by Simpkins and Kushner (1986), 68% of those surveyed responded that knowledge of AIDS had not influenced them to change sexual behaviors. Strunin and Hingson (1987) surveyed 860 adolescents and noted that 54% were not worried about getting AIDS and 61% thought it was unlikely that they would acquire AIDS in their lifetime. Of the 86 respondents who were sexually active, 15% had changed sexual behaviors since they had learned about AIDS. In the Canadian Youth and AIDS study by King, Beazley, Hankins, Robertson, and Radford (1989), it was reported that even though students were knowledgeable about AIDS they continued to act in ways that could put them at risk of contracting the disease. They suggested that once attitudes are known, educational programs should be implemented and

evaluated. They indicated that students must begin to internalize that AIDS is a serious and deadly health concern and that it can affect their lives. They suggested that strategies should be devised which achieve this internalization to change students' behaviors. Roscoe and Kruger (1990) determined that among 300 late adolescents surveyed, knowledge about AIDS was accurate but only one-third had altered sexual behavior. Maticka-Tyndale (1991) studied 1,334 college students from 1981 through 1988. She found that knowledge about AIDS appeared accurate but it was not applied for effective risk reduction. These studies indicated that many sexually active young people had not internalized the danger of contracting HIV/AIDS and consequently had not modified their behaviors to lessen chances of acquiring the disease.

METHODS

In an attempt to determine what effect an educational module would have on attitudes of college freshman males toward high risk sexual behaviors, a premodule survey and a postmodule survey was administered. The survey was first administered to 563 college freshmen during the second and third weeks of school in the Fall 1990 semester. The survey was given again to 486 students during the Spring 1991 semester after a module on AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) was presented. There were no new students questioned in the second survey and 77 students were lost due to attrition from the college.

The survey included 14 questions involving various types of heterosexual behavior. Questions ranged from low or no risk behavior (sensual nongenital touching) to high risk behavior (unprotected anal intercourse). For each question the student indicated one of these following responses: **"never", "not likely", "maybe", "usually",** and **"always".** If the response was "maybe", the respondent was requested to

write the condition under which he might participate in that particular behavior. Students were given instructions on how to complete the survey. They were informed that participation was optional. At each administration of the survey, students were requested to give honest responses since each questionnaire was completed anonymously. Students were encouraged to ask questions for clarification if necessary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and discussion presented in this paper reflect only those respondents' answers which indicated that the students would participate in high risk sexual behaviors (responding with "maybe", "usually", or "always" to selected questions). Proportions on Tables 1-6 represent that percentage of the total population which selected those responses.

Many students chose the **"maybe"** response for questions that dealt with high risk sexual behaviors. The "maybe" responses are examined more thoroughly in Tables 7-12.

TABLE 1

I WOULD PARTICIPATE IN UNPROTECTED SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH A GIRL I JUST MET

PRETEST	**N=59**		
POSTTEST	**N=68**		
	MAYBE	**USUALLY**	**ALWAYS**
PRE	**7.8%**	**2.3%**	**0.5%**
POST	**11.6%**	**1.6%**	**0.6%**

The total number of students willing to participate in unprotected sexual intercourse with a girl they had just met increased from premodule survey to postmodule survey (Table 1). Though not large, changes from the

first to the second survey for "maybe" and "always" responses also indicated an increase in those who were likely to participate in unprotected sexual intercourse with a girl they just met.

TABLE 2

I WOULD PARTICIPATE IN UNPROTECTED SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH A GIRL I JUST MET THROUGH A FRIEND

PRETEST	**N=82**		
POSTTEST	**N=94**		
	MAYBE	**USUALLY**	**ALWAYS**
PRE	**9.5%**	**4.6%**	**0.5%**
POST	**14.7%**	**3.1%**	**1.4%**

The number of students willing to participate in unprotected sexual intercourse with a girl they had just met through a friend (Table 2) increased from premodule survey to postmodule survey. When compared with the absolute number of respondents willing to have unprotected sexual intercourse with a girl they had just met (Table 1), subjects were much more willing to have unprotected intercourse with a girl introduced to them by a friend. These results may be due in part to speculation that meeting a girl through a friend makes her a more valid sex partner.

Students viewed giving oral sex as less risky (Table 3) than unprotected sexual intercourse with a girl they had just met (Table 1) or one introduced to them by a friend (Table 2). Respondents who selected "usually" or "always" decreased from premodule survey to postmodule survey while those who answered "maybe" increased.

TABLE 3

I WOULD PARTICIPATE IN ORAL SEX (WOULD BE THE GIVER) WITH A GIRL I JUST MET

PRETEST	N= 97		
POSTTEST	N=124		
	MAYBE	USUALLY	ALWAYS
PRE	9.3%	5.9%	2.1%
POST	20.1%	4.1%	1.4%

Table 4 indicates subjects may feel less dubious of a person met through a friend when asked whether or not they would give oral sex. There was a desirable decrease from premodule survey to postmodule survey responses of "usually", a slight increase in "always" responses, and more than twice as many respondents were "maybe" willing to participate in this behavior even after the educational unit.

TABLE 4

I WOULD PARTICIPATE IN ORAL SEX (WOULD BE THE GIVER) WITH GIRL I JUST MET THROUGH A FRIEND

PRETEST	N=115		
POSTTEST	N=150		
	MAYBE	USUALLY	ALWAYS
PRE	11.7%	6.8%	2.0%
POST	24.8%	3.9%	2.3%

TABLE 5

I WOULD PARTICIPATE IN UNPROTECTED ANAL INTERCOURSE WITH GIRL I JUST MET

PRETEST	N=16		
POSTTEST	N=24		
	MAYBE	USUALLY	ALWAYS
PRE	1.6%	1.1%	0.2%
POST	3.4%	1.0%	0.4%

Unprotected anal intercourse with a girl they had just met was less likely to be practiced than other behaviors in question (Table 5). However, results showed increases from premodule survey to postmodule survey in the total numbers, as well as in the selection of "maybe" and "always" responses.

TABLE 6

I WOULD PARTICIPATE IN UNPROTECTED ANAL INTERCOURSE WITH A GIRL I JUST MET THROUGH A FRIEND

PRETEST	N=22		
POSTTEST	N=29		
	MAYBE	USUALLY	ALWAYS
PRE	2.9%	0.4%	1.1%
POST	4.3%	0.8%	0.8%

A greater number of respondents would have participated in unprotected anal intercourse with a girl met through a friend (Table 6) than one they had just met (Table 5). Increases were generally observed

in the number of students who would participate in such behavior from premodule to postmodule survey even though they had been exposed to information that this was a high risk behavior.

Tables 7-12 depict the "maybe" responses given on each question regarding high risk behaviors. If the response to a question was "maybe", each student was asked to indicate the condition under which he might participate in the behavior.

TABLE 7

CONDITIONS INFLUENCING "MAYBE" RESPONSES

I WOULD PARTICIPATE IN UNPROTECTED SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH A GIRL I JUST MET

PRETEST N=43

POSTTEST N=57

	DRUGS/ALCOHOL	SETTING	HYGIENE	INSTINCTS	REPUTATION	LOOKS
PRE	9%	14%	14%	32%	5%	26%
POST	14%	32%	12%	26%	7%	9%

There were increased numbers of "maybe" responses from premodule survey to postmodule survey when asked the question "would you participate in unprotected sexual intercourse with a girl you just met?" (Table 7). "Hygiene", "instincts", and "looks" became less important factors in the decision to have unprotected sexual intercourse than did "drugs/alcohol", "setting", and "reputation".

The number of subjects willing to participate in unprotected intercourse with a girl introduced to them by a friend increased from premodule survey to postmodule survey (Table 8). "Under the influence of

TABLE 8

CONDITIONS INFLUENCING "MAYBE" RESPONSES

I WOULD PARTICIPATE IN UNPROTECTED SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH A GIRL I JUST MET THROUGH A FRIEND

PRETEST N=53
POSTTEST N=72

	DRUGS/ALCOHOL	SETTING	HYGIENE	INSTINCTS	REPUTATION	LOOKS
PRE	4%	8%	18%	43%	17%	9%
POST	8%	22%	10%	26%	24%	10%

drugs/alcohol", "setting", "reputation", and "looks" were variables that become increasingly important in this decision, while "hygiene" and "instincts" became lesser factors.

TABLE 9

CONDITIONS INFLUENCING "MAYBE" RESPONSE

I WOULD PARTICIPATE IN ORAL SEX (WOULD BE THE GIVER) WITH A GIRL I JUST MET

PRETEST N=52
POSTTEST N=97

	DRUGS/ALCOHOL	SETTING	HYGIENE	INSTINCTS	REPUTATION	LOOKS
PRE	4%	13%	18%	48%	4%	13%
POST	11%	13%	31%	29%	4%	13%

The total number of respondents who would give oral sex to a girl they had just met increased from the premodule survey to the postmodule survey (Table 9). Variables that were more important in this decision were "under the influence of drugs/alcohol" and "hygiene" (if they looked and smelled clean). "Instincts" became less of a factor while "setting", "reputation", and "looks" were conditions that remained unchanged.

TABLE 10

CONDITIONS INFLUENCING "MAYBE" RESPONSES

I WOULD PARTICIPATE IN ORAL SEX (WOULD BE THE GIVER) WITH GIRL I JUST MET THROUGH A FRIEND

PRETEST N=66

POSTTEST N=120

	DRUGS/ALCOHOL	SETTING	HYGIENE	INSTINCTS	REPUTATION	LOOKS
PRE	3%	11%	15%	42%	11%	18%
POST	8%	17%	28%	31%	8%	9%

There was an increase in the total number of "maybe" responses for those willing to give oral sex to a girl if they had just met her through a friend (Table 10) as compared to the number of "maybe" responses willing to give oral sex to a girl they had just met (Table 9). "Drugs/alcohol influence", "setting", and "hygiene" became more important conditions while "instincts", "reputation", and "looks" diminished in importance.

The total number of respondents willing to participate in unprotected anal intercourse with a girl they had just met increased from the premodule survey to the postmodule survey (Table 11). Variables of increased value to the subjects were the influence of "drugs/alcohol",

TABLE 11

CONDITIONS INFLUENCING "MAYBE" RESPONSES

I WOULD PARTICIPATE IN UNPROTECTED ANAL INTERCOURSE WITH GIRL I JUST MET

PRETEST N=9

POSTTEST N=17

	DRUGS/ALCOHOL	SETTING	HYGIENE	INSTINCTS	REPUTATION	LOOKS
PRE	11%	45%	0%	33%	11%	0%
POST	24%	29%	6%	29%	0%	12%

"hygiene", and "looks". The "setting", "instincts", and "reputation" became less important from the premodule survey to the postmodule survey.

TABLE 12

CONDITIONS INFLUENCING "MAYBE" RESPONSES

I WOULD PARTICIPATE IN UNPROTECTED ANAL INTERCOURSE WITH GIRL I JUST MET THROUGH A FRIEND

PRETEST N=16

POSTTEST N=21

	DRUGS/ALCOHOL	SETTING	HYGIENE	INSTINCTS	REPUTATION	LOOKS
PRE	6%	25%	6%	31%	19%	13%
POST	14%	19%	5%	43%	10%	10%

Again in Table 12 the number of respondents who would "maybe" participate in unprotected anal intercourse with a girl they had just met through a friend increased from premodule survey to postmodule survey. "Drugs/alcohol" influence and "instincts" became more important. "Setting", "hygiene", "reputation", and "looks" diminished in importance from the premodule survey to the postmodule survey.

CONCLUSIONS

This current study supports previous research which found that education alone is not sufficient to prevent high risk sexual behaviors. Alternative strategies must be developed to stimulate an internalization of the problem and risk involved with participating in high risk sexual behaviors. Despite exposure to classroom discussions, contemporary videos and filmstrips, a guest speaker from the public health services, lectures, reading assignments, and a written exam on STDs and HIV/AIDS, these students were generally more likely to participate in high risk behaviors after education than before.

Future research should investigate the variables (besides education) which influence lifestyle decisions of college-aged young adults. These may include peer pressure, advertising, various types of socialization, and rebellion. Further study is anticipated which will examine the role of age in decision-making and in attitudes toward selected high risk sexual behaviors.

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